

REQUEST FOR INITIAL GRANT PROPOSALS (RFIP)
Making Smart Growth Work:
Reuse and Revitalization of Vacant and Abandoned Properties

OVERVIEW INFORMATION

FEDERAL AGENCY NAME: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation; Development, Community and Environment Division (DCED).

FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE: Making Smart Growth Work: Reuse and Revitalization of Vacant and Abandoned Properties, Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP)

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: This is an initial announcement of a funding opportunity.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: SGVAC-04

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER: 66.611, Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants, authorized under Delegation of Authority I-47.

DATES: Initial proposals must be submitted to U.S. EPA by August 30, 2004. Award announcements are expected to be made by February 2005.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Development, Community, and Environment Division in U.S. EPA's Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation is soliciting initial proposals for a technical assistance program Making Smart Growth Work: Reuse and Revitalization of Vacant and Abandoned Properties SGVAC-04, CFDA 66.611, "Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants," Delegation of Authority I-47.

EPA is seeking proposals from eligible organizations to translate local efforts to prevent and redevelop vacant properties to state, regional, and/or national level applications -- to make those lessons available and applicable to a large number of localities, states, trades, and other relevant organizations. EPA expects to award one assistance agreement under this solicitation and expects to have approximately \$30,000 available for first-year funding with a ceiling of \$90,000 for the life of the agreement. A final agreement will be negotiated for a three year budget and project period, with future funding dependent on the availability of funds, agency priorities, and applicant performance.

The award will be in the form of a cooperative agreement, which entails substantial involvement by the U.S. EPA. Eligible applicants include incorporated nonprofit

organizations incorporated or domiciled in the U.S.; U.S.-based public agencies, institutions and organizations; and individuals. Cost-sharing is encouraged but not required. Only one application per applicant is permitted. Initial proposals must be submitted to EPA by August 30, 2004. Award announcements are expected to be made in February 2005. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

FULL TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT

Section 1: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

EPA is seeking proposals from eligible organizations to translate local efforts to prevent and redevelop vacant properties to state, regional, and/or national level applications-- to make those lessons available and applicable to a large number of localities, states, trades, and other relevant organizations. EPA has previously provided funding to support the National Vacant Properties Campaign, an effort to prevent abandonment, redevelop vacant properties and revitalize existing communities. This RFIP seeks to support and further the work of the National Vacant Properties Campaign.

Collaboration with the National Vacant Properties Campaign and with organizations seeking to implement smart growth by returning vacant properties to productive use are encouraged. For more information on the National Vacant Properties Campaign go to <http://www.vacantproperties.org/> .

A successful applicant, with substantial EPA involvement, will work to enhance state, regional, and/or national level capacity to support local efforts to reclaim vacant properties and prevent the creation of new vacant properties. The successful applicant will focus on lessons learned from local efforts to reuse vacant and abandoned properties. The applicant must address at least one of the following: 1) disseminate knowledge about successful practices and innovative policies that address returning vacant properties to productive use or preventing abandonment; and/or 2) inform policy-makers, stakeholders, and others about the adverse effects of vacant properties on the environment, economy, and communities; and/or 3) catalyze the adoption of vacant property redevelopment techniques, policy solutions, and other strategies at the state, regional, or local level.

Returning abandoned and vacant properties to productive use helps protect the environment and meet the goals of smart growth in several ways:

- the majority of these properties are located near existing infrastructure, making more efficient use of investments that communities have already made in roads, power, and other utility services.
- the regionally central location of many abandoned properties means that if they are reclaimed, there is likely to be less resulting auto travel when compared to a similar amount of development at the edge of an urban area. This will generate less auto emissions.
- redevelopment of these properties takes some growth pressure off of greenfield sites such as wildlife habitat and farmland at the edge of urban areas.

- restoring vacant and abandoned properties helps to foster safety in the community by reclaiming derelict property that could attract criminal activity or be subject to arson.
- many vacant and abandoned properties become dumping grounds for everything from old tires to hazardous chemicals.
- vacant and abandoned properties include many brownfields – sites with some level of environmental contamination. Reuse of the properties will result in remediation of more of these sites.

This RFIP is being issued by the Development, Community and Environment Division (DCED) in the U.S. EPA's Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation. DCED focuses on smart growth issues of regional and national significance. Smart growth development practices support national environmental and public health goals by protecting sensitive watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from development, reducing air emissions by increasing transportation choices, and encouraging the cleanup and sustainable redevelopment of Brownfields.

Successful applicants must demonstrate expertise in smart growth and experience working collaboratively to find common ground on growth and development issues. Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, public health, and the environment. It is characterized by a common set of development principles: mix land uses; take advantage of compact building design; create a range of housing opportunities and choices; create walkable neighborhoods; foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place; preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas; strengthen and direct development towards existing communities; encourage a variety of transportation choices; make development decisions that are predictable, fair and cost-effective; and encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Section 2: AWARD INFORMATION

EPA expects to award one assistance agreement under this solicitation and expects to have approximately \$30,000 available for first year activities under this funding cycle. This is subject to availability of funding within the Agency's FY 04 budget.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for first-year activities for approximately \$30,000 or less. Final grants may be negotiated for a three year budget and project period, with funding for future years dependent on funding availability, agency priorities and applicant performance. A ceiling of approximately \$90,000 for a three year agreement is suggested.

Applicants should provide detailed descriptions of the activities proposed for the first-year under this competition, as well as a description of what follow-up activities would be conducted in subsequent years if additional funding is made available. The assistance agreement awards will be in the form of cooperative agreements. Cooperative agreements entail substantial Federal involvement in the project. Such involvement may include US EPA review and approval of project scope and phases;

EPA participation in and collaboration on various phases of the work; approval of the substantive terms of contracts; EPA review of all draft and final products; and regular e-mail, phone, and conference calls.

The expected time span for any cooperative agreements awarded under this RFIP (i.e., the project and budget period) will be from February 2005 through February 2008. EPA plans to use FY 04 funds to support this assistance agreement; funding may not occur until early FY 05 (FY 05 begins 10/1/04 and runs through 9/30/05). EPA reserves the discretion to select additional awardees from this solicitation for possible funding in the second or third quarter of FY 05 (i.e., February 2005 - June 2005).

Section 3: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Section 3.1: ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include (1) Incorporated nonprofit (or not-for-profit) agencies, institutions, and organizations incorporated or domiciled in the United States, and (2) public (tribal, state, county, regional or local) agencies, institutions and organizations; and (3) individuals. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States. Nonprofit organizations described in section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit organizations also are not eligible to apply. Please see section 4.5 for information on eligible activities and costs.

Section 3.2: COST-SHARING OR MATCHING

There are no match or cost-sharing requirements. However, the degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and leverages matching funds both will be considered as evaluation criteria. Matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any dollars counted towards a formal match must be for costs that U.S. EPA can fund. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87. If applicants indicate matching funds from sources other than themselves, they should indicate if such funds are committed at the time of application or when they will be available.

Section 3.3: OTHER

Only one application per applicant will be accepted. To be eligible, applicants must meet all of the following threshold criteria. Threshold criteria will be applied on a pass/fail basis. Failure to meet any of them will render an application ineligible; ineligible applications will not be reviewed.

Threshold Criterion 1: Smart Growth focus

The proposal must embody, result in, or encourage smart growth. The proposal must focus on the issues, subjects, and activities targeted by this RFIP and explained under the section entitled "Funding Opportunity Description." The proposal must clearly

demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the smart growth issues addressed by the project. The applicant must clearly demonstrate expertise in smart growth issues, commitment to smart growth, and collaboration with organizations seeking to implement smart growth by returning vacant properties to productive use. U.S. EPA will use the smart growth definition outlined in Section 1 ("Funding Opportunity Description") to apply this criterion.

Threshold Criterion 2: Allowable Activities

The proposal must consist of activities authorized under one or more of the following U.S. EPA grant authorities: Clean Air Act section 103 (b) (3); Clean Water Act section 104 (b) (3); Solid Waste Disposal Act section 8001, as amended; Toxic Substances Control Act section 10; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act section 20, as supplemented by P.L. 106-74; and Safe Drinking Water Act sections 1442 (a) and (c). Most of these statutes authorize grants for research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies. The project activities must advance the state of knowledge or transfer information. The term "demonstrations" can encompass the first instance of a pollution control or prevention technique, or an innovative application of a previously used method. The term "research" may include the application of established practices when they contribute to learning about an environmental concept or problem.

Threshold Criterion 3: Environmental Focus

The project's general focus must be one that is specified in the statutes listed above under threshold criterion 2. For most statutes the project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air, water, or solid/hazardous waste pollution. In the case of grants under the Toxic Substances Control Act or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, the project must "(carry) out the purposes of the Act." The overarching focus must be on the statutory purpose of the applicable grant authorities, which in most cases is "to prevent or control pollution." In light of this, proposals relating to topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration, or habitat protection must describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Threshold Criterion 4: Serve a Public Purpose

Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the proposed activities will be of primary benefit to the applicant organization and the public at large. Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the proposed activities directly support the applicant organization's overall mission and long-term goals.

Threshold Criterion 5: Complete Applications That Are Submitted on Time

To be eligible, applications must comply with the mandatory provisions of sections 4.2 and 4.3.

Section 4: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Section 4.1: HOW TO GET APPLICATION MATERIALS

This announcement provides all of the instructions needed for preparing an initial proposal. While there are no required application forms or kits, there are format and content requirements which are described below under section 4.2, "Content and Form of Application Submission." Paper copies of this announcement can be obtained by contacting the EPA personnel listed in section 7. Electronic copies will be available on the DCED web site (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth).

Section 4.2: CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

To be considered complete and eligible for review, all proposals must include a cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, and (if applicable) confirmation of partner participation. Proposals should not exceed 10 pages (see below for additional details). The following format is required for all proposals:

Cover letter (does not count against page limit)

The cover letter that accompanies your proposal must be signed by an official with the authority to commit your organization to the project and should be written on your organization's official letterhead.

Summary information page (does not count against page limit)

The summary information page should be one-page long and include the following information:

--the title and number of this request for initial proposals (Making Smart Growth Work: Reuse and Revitalization of Vacant and Abandoned Properties SGVAC-04)

--project title and location

--applicant name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address

--name and title of project contact (including how to reach if different from above)

--type of applicant organization (e.g., nonprofit, local government, state government, etc.)

--summary budget information (amount requested from U.S. EPA; amount and source of any matching funds)

-- 5 to 10 line abstract of the proposal

Project description (no longer than 10 page sides)

The project description must provide a concise overview of the project and should include a preliminary workplan outlining all major tasks, products, and timetables. The narrative must also address how the proposal meets each of the threshold and selection

criteria, and what environmental results the applicant expects. If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be clearly defined. In reviewing the project description, reviewers will not consider any pages over the 10 page side limit. Project descriptions must use no smaller than 10 point type, and should have page margins all-around of at least one inch.

Budget and budget narrative (does not count against page limit)

The project budget must include all relevant direct costs (e.g., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and other). Indirect costs must also be included. Entries under each category must be explained in a budget narrative.

Documentation of qualifications (does not count against page limit)

The applicant must include short profiles of all principal staff who will have a major role in the project. Where applicable, this includes principal staff from partner organizations. These profiles must specifically address each individual's experience with smart growth issues and their areas of expertise related to the project.

Confirmation of partner participation and/or match (does not count against page limit)

If applicable, applicants who are partnering with other organizations, agencies or institutions must include a letter from the partner, on partner letterhead, indicating the partner's role in the project. Each partner letter must be signed by an individual with the authority to commit the partner to the project. Letters confirming partner participation must be included in the initial proposal package and will not be accepted separately. Proposals relying on partner participation which are missing documentation of that participation will be considered ineligible.

Partnerships must identify which eligible organization (defined above) will be the recipient of the assistance agreement, and which eligible organization(s) will be subawardees/subgrantees of the recipient. Subawards/subgrants must be consistent with the definitions of those terms in 40 CFR 30.2(ff) and 40 CFR 31.3 *Subgrant*, as applicable. EPA encourages applicants to compete subgrants; applicants must provide information on the competitive process they will use for any subgrants. The recipient must administer the assistance agreement, is accountable to EPA for proper expenditure of funds, and will be the point of contact for the coalition. Subrecipients are accountable to the recipient for proper use of EPA funding.

Applicants may not use EPA funding to make subgrants/subawards to for profit organizations or consultants but may procure goods or services from such entities by contract. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance (whether awarded to a for profit or nonprofit organization) must be awarded under the competitive procurement provisions of 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR Part 31, as applicable.

Additional information regarding how applications should be submitted and what will happen following selection

Applicants must submit one original and four copies of their full proposal. E-mail and fax submissions will not be accepted. Following selection, successful applicants will be required to make a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal. Applicants should be aware that there may be a very quick turnaround required if they are asked to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., within four weeks or less after contacted by EPA after the initial selection process).

Section 4.3: SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

U.S. EPA must receive proposals by 5 PM East Coast Time August 30, 2004. No late proposals will be accepted. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. Postmarks or meter stamps will not be sufficient documentation of on-time delivery.

Section 4.4: INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

All applicants should be aware that formal requests for assistance (i.e., SF 424 and associated documentation) may be subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Applicants should contact their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for further information. There is a list of these contacts at the following web site:
<http://whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

Section 4.5: FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Funding is only available for the activities authorized under one or more of the U.S. EPA grant authorities cited in section 3.3, threshold criteria 2 and 3). Funding will not be permitted for construction activity, lobbying, entertainment expenses, or other unallowable costs under the OMB circulars. Preaward costs and equipment costs are allowable only with the written consent of EPA. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87. Any contracts for services or products funded with EPA financial assistance must be awarded under the competitive procurement provisions of 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR Part 31, as applicable. Subawards/subgrants must be consistent with the definitions of these terms in 40 CFR 30.2 (ff) and 40 CFR 31.3 *Subgrant* as applicable. EPA encourages applicants to compete subgrants. (See Section 4.2, confirmation of partner participation, for further details)

Section 4.6: OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must submit one original and four copies of their full proposal. The full proposal includes the cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, and documentation of partner participation (if applicable). All applications must be submitted in paper copy in accordance with the requirements stated above. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. As mentioned in section 4.2, postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on time delivery.

The delivery address for submitting your proposal will vary depending on whether you are mailing your proposal or arranging for hand delivery. If you're sending your

proposal via hand delivery (e.g., UPS, Federal Express, courier or some other means) send it to:

Carlton Eley
U.S. EPA
Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation
Development, Community and Environment Division
1301 Constitution Avenue N.W.
room 1417 C
Washington, D.C. 20004

If you are mailing your proposal, send it to:

Carlton Eley
U.S. EPA Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation
Development, Community and Environment Division
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W. mail code 1807 T
Washington, D.C. 20460

Please note that there may be substantial delays in conventional mail service to U.S. EPA due to heightened security screening.

Section 5: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1: SELECTION CRITERIA

If the proposal meets the threshold criteria articulated in section 3.3 above, it will then be evaluated against the following selection criteria:

1. Potential impact of the project and likelihood of success.
2. Degree to which the applicant and any partners on the project demonstrate smart growth expertise and experience.
3. Degree to which the proposing organization is an appropriate representative for the issues dealt with in the assistance agreement, is likely to be viewed as an authority on vacant and abandoned properties, or is partnering with an organization that meets these requirements.
4. Degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds.
5. Degree to which the project effectively leverages matching funds.
6. Degree to which the project approach or findings are replicable, and will be effectively disseminated to appropriate audiences.
7. Degree to which the project effectively builds upon the work of the National Vacant Properties Campaign.
8. Programmatic capability.

Programmatic capability refers to the administrative and management capabilities of an organization. In evaluating programmatic capability, EPA will consider the qualifications of key personnel, the quality of proposed competitive processes for selecting contractors and subgrantees, and the applicant's past performance administering projects funded by EPA or other federal agencies. Applicants must discuss their performance history (including adverse audit or grants administration findings for the five years preceding application) in their proposals and provide contacts for EPA to obtain additional information. If applicants have not received federal funding before, they should provide other information that would help demonstrate their organization's capability to successfully manage grant funds. This might include but is not limited to administration of programs funded through state grants or foundations.

Proposals will be scored against each of the selection criteria using a numerical scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high. Factor 1 will be weighted by 3; factors 2 and 7 will be weighted by 2.

5.2: REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

EPA will evaluate each of the selection criteria based on the information provided in the proposal and related attachments. Factors such as geographic diversity, project diversity, and applicant diversity (i.e., type of organization) may also be considered.

5.3: ANTICIPATED ANNOUNCEMENT AND AWARD DATES

See section 6.1

Section 6: AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1: AWARD NOTICES

Successful applicants will receive an official notice of award from EPA's grants management office.

EPA will announce successful recipients on the U.S. EPA smart growth web site (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth). This information will be posted within 30 days after U.S. EPA's grant administration division issues a written offer of award to the recipient. U.S. EPA anticipates that awards will be announced in or around February 2005.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via mail or e-mail in the winter of 2004. Applicants who do not pass threshold screening will be notified during the fall of 2004 before final award decisions are made.

Applicants should be aware that they are not authorized to begin performance on a project until they have received their official award document from the EPA's grant office. No preaward costs may be incurred without EPA's approval; preaward costs are undertaken at the recipient's risk.

6.2: ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must comply with the standard requirements, terms and conditions of EPA assistance agreements. Funded activities must be allowable under EPA statutory authority (see section 3). All recipients must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number on their formal SF424 applications. A DUNS number can be obtained by calling 1-866-705-5711. A DUNS number is not required for initial proposals.

6.3: REPORTING

Recipients will be required to submit quarterly progress reports and will have to participate in annual reviews of their projects with their U.S. EPA project officer. A project officer will be designated at the time of the award of this cooperative agreement; that project officer will work in partnership with the recipient.

Section 7: AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have questions about this solicitation, please contact:

Carlton Eley
U.S. EPA Development Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Mail code 1807 T

Washington, D.C. 20004

phone: 202-566-2841

eley.carlton@epa.gov

Answers to frequently asked questions will be posted on the U.S. EPA smart growth web site (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth). The only pre-application assistance available under this competition will be related to clarifying the requirements of the RFIP.

Section 8: OTHER INFORMATION

Both initial proposals and formal request for funding are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that anyone can request, and receive, copies of them. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential. U.S. EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with agency regulations (40CFR part 2, subpart B).

Any disputes regarding funding decisions will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR part 30 or 31, depending on the applicant. U.S. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.